

NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 197

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

**THE SILENT
VICTIMS OF
PLASTIC
POLLUTION**

P.2&3 **EDITO**

World Environment Day 2025 – Focus on mangroves, the silent victims of plastic pollution in DRC

**MOOC, TUTORIALS
ET ESSENTIELS**

P.4 & 5 **OUR ONLINE COURSES**

Find out all the latest news about our MOOCs, Tutorials and Essentials and join the mooc-conservation.org platform.

**YOUTH
CONSERVATION**

P.6 TO 12 **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

News from the 'Acting for Nature Conservation' project: many activities launched and children made aware!



Mangroves, silent victims of plastic pollution in DRC

Par Myong Cham Kandolo
Victoir

Tuteur Youth Conservation et
conservateur communautaire au parc
marin des mangroves

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2025, we turn our attention to an often-overlooked frontline of the fight against plastic pollution: the mangroves (here in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). These rich and vital ecosystems are silently suffocating under the weight of a global crisis.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to a unique and vital coastal ecosystem: its mangroves. These complex networks of salt-tolerant trees are not only a natural wonder—they are essential habitats for countless marine species, serving as nurseries for fish, crustaceans, and a variety of other aquatic life. Beyond their role in supporting biodiversity, mangroves also act as crucial natural barriers, protecting shorelines from erosion and providing livelihoods for local communities.

Yet these vital ecosystems are under a silent—but increasingly devastating—attack: plastic pollution. This is not just a local issue; it is a global crisis. Millions of tons of plastic waste end up in our oceans, rivers, and lands each year, causing irreversible damage to our planet.

In the DRC, the Mangrove Marine Park—a symbol of the richness of marine biodiversity—is a striking example of how vulnerable these ecosystems are to this pervasive threat. The insidious nature of plastic pollution lies in its persistence. Unlike organic waste, plastic does not biodegrade; it simply breaks down into smaller and smaller fragments known as microplastics.

These fragments infiltrate every levels of the food chain, affecting marine life and ultimately posing risks to human health. In mangrove forests, plastic bags, bottles, fishing nets, and other debris smother the roots of mangrove trees, preventing them from breathing and hindering their growth. Marine animals become entangled in the waste, leading to injury, starvation, and death. The sheer volume of plastic accumulating in these complex root systems can choke the ecosystem, turning once-thriving nurseries into barren wastelands.

Despite the scale of the challenge, growing efforts are underway in the DRC to combat plastic pollution and protect its precious mangroves. These initiatives often take a multidimensional approach, focusing on awareness-raising and cleanup operations. Beyond cleanups, increasing emphasis is being placed on education and awareness campaigns through community conservation programs. These initiatives aim to inform the public about the dangers of plastic pollution and promote responsible waste management practices. Workshops are held in coastal communities to encourage proper waste disposal, recycling, and the reduction of single-use plastics.

EDITO

» In addition, emerging efforts are engaging local authorities and policymakers in order to develop and enforce regulations aimed at reducing plastic waste. This includes exploring options to improve waste collection infrastructure, promoting alternatives to plastic packaging, and potentially implementing bans on certain single-use plastic items. While significant legislative progress is still needed, the conversation is gaining momentum.

The fight against plastic pollution in the DRC's mangroves is a long-term commitment. The outcomes of current initiatives, though promising, are often localized and require sustained effort. The sheer scale of the problem demands a more comprehensive and coordinated national strategy, coupled with international support.

However, the dedication of local communities, environmental organizations, and a growing number of stakeholders offers a glimmer of hope. Protecting the mangroves is not just about preserving a unique ecosystem; it is about safeguarding the future of the communities that depend on them, ensuring biodiversity, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The time has come to act decisively and collaboratively so that these silent victims of plastic pollution can once again thrive.



OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCs, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

Our 7 MOOCs, 4 Essentials and 3 Tutorialsa are open and available right now!



MOOC Conservation

Free online training courses for amateurs and professionals in conservation and protected areas

Start learning →

To follow the ESSENTIAL MOOCs and Courses, you will need an internet connection and access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.



MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria.

See you on:

www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCs THEME-BASED TRAINING



MOOC PA management

Goal: understand the essence and goals of PAs. Students will be able to grasp the importance of PAs, their role and the different management aspects.



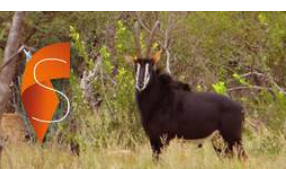
MOOC Ecological monitoring

Goal: understand the different techniques used in protected areas to assess the impact of management by monitoring the ecosystem.



MOOC Law enforcement

Goal: understand the different legal contexts in Africa, their strengths and weaknesses as well as the techniques used to effectively enforce rules in parks.



MOOC Species conservation

Goal: understand the techniques developed to conserve species in PAs, in situ and ex situ. The MOOC covers the main threats, as well as solutions that can help face these threats.



MOOC Valorisation of resources

Goal: knowing how the valorisation of different protected area resources can take place, and understanding protected area valorisation through tourism.



MOOC New technologies

Goal: context of new technologies applied to conservation, existing techniques, prerequisites for their implementation, their opportunities and limitations, their uses in the field...



MOOC Marine protected areas

Goal: understanding as the design and creation of MPA networks, governance, ecological monitoring, but also surrounding economic activities, and how to include all this to MPA management.

ESSENTIALS PROFILE-BASED TRAINING



RANGER Essential

For protected area (PA) professionals who apply decisions and ensure the implementation of activities inside or around the PA.



MANAGER Essential

These two courses are for protected area professionals who need to plan, manage and assess the work carried out by field agents.



MANAGER LAW focuses on law enforcement and the valorisation of the PA and its natural resources.

MANAGER RESEARCH focuses on research activities, monitoring-evaluation and ecological monitoring.



LEADER Essential

For managers working in central management of parks or large NGOs, they elaborate national and regional policies, they proceed to cross-sectoral

coordination and manage complex plans and programmes. This course focuses on more general skills to enable a better understanding of the stakes of bio-diversity conservation, all for better decision-making.

MOOC CONSERVATION IS
SUPPORTED BY THE
FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL



PLANNED FOR JUNE

OUR FIRST INTERNS GO ON THE GROUND AND ONLINE CERTIFICATE EXAM!



MOOC CONSERVATION INTERNSHIPS: DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST CANDIDATES

Starting in June, thanks to funding from the French Global Environment Facility and the IUCN PAPACO / Senghor University partnership, **23 interns** will head to the field to put into practice the knowledge they've acquired on mooc-conservation.org, and to experience the realities of protected areas. We'll talk more about this in the July edition of NAPA, with the first field reports.

If you would **also like to go on an internship**, here's what you need to do:

- Successfully complete the **CEL** (Certificate of Protected Area Management);
- Be a **citizen of French-speaking Africa** or, starting with the next cohort, of **Haiti**;
- Be able to present a **solid professional project**.

So now you know what's next: complete some MOOCs and pass the CEL!

A quick note to those who were not selected for the first cohort: there is no elimination. In other words, you will be contacted again when the selection for the second cohort begins.

CEL EXAMS: 24 AND 25 OF JUNE 2025

The countdown has begun! The exams for the Online Certificate in PA Conservation will take place on:

- June 24, 2025 at 08:00 UTC for French-speakers
- June 25, 2025 at 08:00 UTC for English-speakers

Participation details are available [here](#).

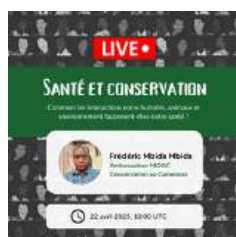
Good luck to all candidates!

YOUTUBE LIVE REPLAYS

Youtube LIVES replays are now available (FRENCH ONLY):



Human-wildlife
conflicts in
Cameroon



Health and
conservation



The status of
protected areas in
Haïti

2025 MOOC CONSERVATION CALENDAR

20 June: Q&A with the MOOC team.

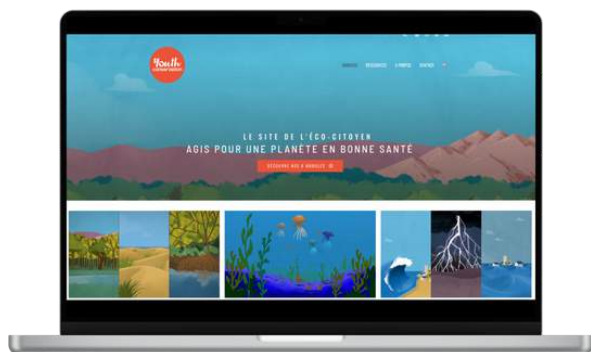
24 June: exam for the Online Certificate in PA Conservation - *French-speakers*

25 June: exam for the Online Certificate in PA Conservation - *English-speakers*

The registrations link to the webinars will be available on [MOOC Conservation under Live Sessions](#).

YOUTH CONSERVATION

DISCOVER, UNDERSTAND AND ACT FOR THE PLANET



Online platform, 100% free of charge, brings together dedicated resources:

- For children and young people: 6 didactic and interactive courses on the major themes of nature conservation: terrestrial and marine biodiversity, climate change, nature and health, etc.

- For educators: downloadable teaching resources to facilitate learning and the running of educational sessions (posters, guides, etc.).

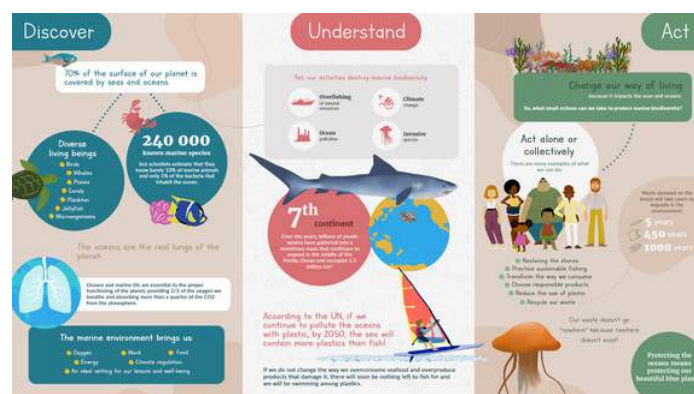
VISIT WWW.YOUTH-CONSERVATION.ORG !

HIGHLIGHT ON YOUTH CONSERVATION POSTERS !

Among the various free educational and teaching resources available on the Youth Conservation platform, the posters are now widely praised by educators and trainers in environmental education!

Each Youth Conservation module's key lessons are highlighted in the form of an infographic. These posters are designed to help you lead engaging sessions with children of all ages.

Currently available in French and English, these posters will soon be ready in Malagasy, Mooré, Swahili, Zulu, Portuguese, Wolof, Sepedi, Xhosa, and Arabic.



Can be projected in class or printed as needed!

SOME NEWS ABOUT THE PROJECT

ACTING FOR NATURE CONSERVATION: TRAINING AND INSPIRING FUTURE ECO-CITIZENS IN AFRICA



The "Acting for Nature Conservation and Inspiring Future Eco-Citizens in Africa" initiative, launched two months ago in partnership with the Audemars Watkins Foundation and Play for Nature, is already showing promising results on the ground!

This initiative supports 10 NGOs working in Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, and Madagascar to raise awareness among young people about environmental protection through educational activities.

Many activities have already been implemented, and despite extreme heat and heavy rains, children and youth are enthusiastic, school principals and teachers are highly engaged, and the NGOs remain deeply motivated!

Wishing continued success to everyone involved!

HIGHLIGHT ON THE FIRST ACTIVITIES

Recikit NGO (Senegal)

As part of the "Acting for Nature Conservation" project, the RECIKIT team carried out a major phase of the Xaley Durable program from April 21 to 26, 2025, in the municipality of Dagana.

This initiative engaged over 2,700 students from seven schools in activities focused on waste management, biodiversity conservation, waste sorting, recycling, and fostering ecological awareness from an early age.

Participating schools included:

- École Amadou Basse Sall – 248 students
- École Algor Dioumah – 494 students
- Bloc Scientifique et Technique – 300 st.
- École Dagana 09 – 405 students
- École Alioune Sarr – 399 students
- École Alioune Sow MBana – 628 students
- CEM Makha Sarr – pending final confirmation

Thanks to a range of educational tools — including the Waste Mural, the Biodiversity Mural, Waxtane (an eco-responsible storytelling session), and Cre'art Green — children were trained in a **fun, creative, and participatory way. Teachers unanimously praised the quality of the approach, the children's enthusiasm, and the tangible impact on their daily habits.**

A heartfelt thank you to all the partners, schools, and local authorities who made this possible!



BEES NGO (Benin)

As part of the "Acting for Nature Conservation" project, BEES NGO has launched its first field activities alongside students and teachers from CEG 3, Ewè, and Adakplamé in the municipality of Kétou (Benin), as well as primary school pupils from Kpafè in the municipality of Sô-Ava. These efforts aim to support the conservation of the Kouvizoun Sacred Forest and the Lower Ouémé Valley Biosphere Reserve.



Through **nature-based classroom activities focusing on local plants, endangered and endemic species** of the Kouvizoun Indigenous and Community Conserved Area (ICCA), **the importance of trees and birds, and other ecological and environmental issues, young people were encouraged to take action for the protection of their environment.**

The aim of this initiative is **to train children to become environmental ambassadors and agents of behavioural change toward more eco-friendly practices.**

In Kétou, the project provided targeted students with training on how to establish and sustainably manage ecological school gardens. **These gardens will be used to grow threatened local plant species, supporting future restoration efforts in natural ecosystems.**

Thanks to this initiative, **more than 800 students** from participating schools and 15 teachers were mobilized. Dynamic environmental clubs saw their role strengthened through the provision of materials and the setup of school gardens. Even students who were not members of these clubs showed strong interest—some even pledged to stop killing birds as a sign of their commitment to protecting the Lower Ouémé Valley.

These first steps reflect a growing and genuine awareness, laying the foundation for the long-term engagement of young people in nature conservation!



Health and Conservation NGO (Cameroon)

Action for environmental conservation is a global emergency. Equally important is investing in educating young people about eco-responsibility. This is the goal of the project “Acting for Nature Conservation: Training and Inspiring Future Eco-Citizens in Africa,” supported by the PAPACO/PFN team and implemented in Cameroon by Health And Conservation (HAC), among others, in the Centre and West regions.

With the main objective of encouraging children and youth to take concrete action on the ground, HAC designed activities around four environmental themes in four schools.

At Groupe Scolaire Bilingue Mgr Henri Vieter in Yaoundé, the theme was waste management and recycling, with the primary aim of building young people’s capacity in managing and recycling waste. For this purpose, sorting bins were provided to the school, along with training sessions on waste sorting, focusing mainly on plastic and organic waste.

As part of the recycling activities, students were trained to create decorative items from plastic waste, such as pencil cases, bracelets, desktop containers, and more. Among the items produced were flower pots, which were used to set up a vertical strawberry garden. In total, the initiative reached over 700 students and teachers, resulted in the creation of 150 reusable and decorative items, the establishment of one vertical garden, and the launch of a functioning environmental club, equipped with Youth Conservation materials and resources.

At the Complexe Bilingue Ste Famille de Nazareth in Nkozoa, the focus was on discovering local flora and fauna, with the main objective of enhancing students' theoretical and practical knowledge and skills related to the protection of local biodiversity. To achieve this, awareness sessions and educational field trips were organized, notably to the Mefou National Park and to forested and vegetated areas on the outskirts of the city.



Following these school outings, students created a wildlife mural showcasing key wildlife species in the country and their habitats. They also produced plant herbariums featuring local species, enriched with vernacular and scientific names, their importance to communities, conservation status, and methods of protection. In this school, approximately 600 students and teachers were reached, five herbariums were completed (with a sixth mural in progress), one wildlife mural was produced, and the existing environmental club was strengthened with Youth Conservation materials and resources.

The theme of climate change mitigation was addressed at École Primaire Privée Laïque Bilingue Marceline in Dschang. The main objective was to support and strengthen students' capacity to take action against climate change.

To achieve this, activities included the creation and monitoring of a tree nursery by the students, as well as a reforestation activity using tree species beneficial both to the environment and to local communities.

For the nursery, avocado trees were selected. With guidance from HAC facilitators, children and teachers collected avocado seeds and successfully established a nursery with at least 50 seedlings, along with a monitoring plan. Reforestation was carried out using safou trees (African plum), avocado trees, and banana trees. At this stage of the project, 280 students and teachers have been reached, one tree nursery established, around 100 trees planted, and a new environmental club created and equipped with Youth Conservation materials and resources.

The final theme — sustainable production, enhancement, and management of natural resources — was implemented at Collège Mgr Henri Vieter in Yaoundé. The main objective was to train young people in the sustainable production and management of natural resources.

To achieve this, awareness and training sessions were organized with teachers and students. Following these sessions, a compost-making activity was carried out using biodegradable waste from the school and nearby households. The resulting compost was then used in a vegetable gardening activity, establishing a school garden with crops intended to supply the school canteen. To monitor the garden and ensure the continuation of environmental education activities, a new environmental club was created. At this stage of the project, over 500 students and teachers have been reached, 2 compost bins produced, a vegetable garden with three crops (celery, lettuce, and African nightshade) established, and an environmental club created and equipped with Youth Conservation materials and resources. We look forward to harvest time!

Thanks to this project and the activities conducted in the schools, students and teachers now have the opportunity to complement classroom theory with practical, hands-on experiences aligned with educational goals. The project has also generated strong enthusiasm — both among youth and school staff — who see it as a tangible and impactful contribution to student development and nature conservation.

As of now, over 2,080 students and teachers have been reached, with at least six concrete activities carried out across four schools. According to parents, these proud future eco-citizens are already sharing their new knowledge and skills at home — energetically promoting eco-responsible behaviors within their families.

We can't wait to resume activities after the school holidays!



Sentinelle de la Nature NGO (Burkina Faso)



As part of the implementation of the project "Acting for Nature Conservation: Educating and Mobilizing Future Eco-Citizens in Africa," the association Sentinelle de la Nature (SENTINA) carried out several impactful activities.

At Lycée Philadelphie in Pô, a key milestone of the **Environmental Challenge** was reached. On Wednesday, April 23, 2025, nine teachers were informed and trained, and a jury responsible for overseeing the competition was established. Later, on Friday, May 2 (afternoon) and Saturday, May 3 (morning), student teams participating in the challenge were formed. **These teams received training on the causes and consequences of climate change, along with possible solutions. Youth Conservation's educational resources served as the foundation for these training sessions.**

A total of **90 students**, from classes CP1, CP2, CE1, CE2, CM1, and secondary levels 6e A, 6e B, 5e, and 4e, were divided into nine teams: The Fathers of Nature, The Kings of Nature, The Babies of Nature, The Mothers of Nature, The Darlings of Nature, The Angels of Nature, The Soldiers of Nature, The Guardians of Nature, and The Princes of Nature.

In addition, SENTINA **trained students and teachers from École Primaire Notre Dame de la Paix in Fada on the role and importance of trees in human life, including a practical tree-planting demonstration.** This activity took place on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, with **147 students and 4 teachers participating.** The students were highly engaged, and the demonstration was a great success.

Finally, on Thursday, May 8, 2025, SENTINA donated waste bins to Lycée Privé Évangélique André Brisset in Loumbila. **The donation was followed by a sensitization session on waste management and recovery, targeting students.** The event was attended by local authorities (including a representative of the municipal executive), government agency staff (environmental officers), the Parents' Association, school life staff, teachers, and **247 students.**

All of these activities were made possible thanks to the technical and financial support of PAPACO/PFN



Tropical Forest and Rural Development NGO (Cameroon)



As part of its efforts to conserve biodiversity and combat poaching, Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD), with financial support from PAPACO/Play For Nature, organized a training session from April 26 to 27, 2025, in Somalomo for 46 young members of the ECOCLUB, aged between 12 and 18.

The main objective was to promote beetle farming as an income-generating activity and a sustainable alternative to poaching in the northern periphery of the Dja Wildlife Reserve (RFD).

The program included: palm heart extraction (a staple food), sex identification in beetles, and management of production containers.

Each participant received a starter container and the necessary equipment. **A total of 46 containers were distributed. The youth responded enthusiastically to the initiative, highlighting its simplicity, accessibility, and economic potential.**

"Thanks to this activity, we've realized that it's possible to earn a living without hunting protected animals." — Testimony from a young trainee in Somalomo.

This action is part of a broader approach to awareness-raising, environmental education, and sustainable local development.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

-Albert Einstein, mathematician, physicist, scientist

READING OF THE MONTH

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

BY FABRICE PERNET AND FRÉDÉRIC GAZEAU

Ocean acidification, understanding the effects, exploring the solutions

Ocean acidification, described as "the other CO2 problem", is still considerably unknown. In this book, the authors answer ten key questions on the biogeochemical basis of acidification, on past, current and future trends, on the impact on marine organisms and humans, and finally on remediation measures. It draws its answers from fields as diverse as biogeochemistry, ecology, physiology, evolution, aquaculture and fisheries, economics and sociology.



IN THE NEWS

WORLD ENVIRONNEMENT DAY- 2ND JUNE 2025



Plastic Pollution: A Global Scourge We Must Eradicate Together!

Present in oceans, forests, mountains — and even in our bodies in the form of microplastics — plastic pollution spares no ecosystem. On the occasion of World Environment Day 2025, a powerful call is being made: let's join forces to put an end to this crisis.

This campaign will highlight concrete, nature-inspired solutions and encourage everyone — citizens, NGOs, businesses, and governments — to adopt sustainable practices capable of driving real systemic change.

This year's edition is particularly important: in just two months, countries from around the world will meet again to move forward on an ambitious global treaty to end plastic pollution.

Get involved now by joining the #BeatPlasticPollution movement. Together, let's build a healthier future for the planet and all its inhabitants.

Watch the 2025 campaign film [HERE](#).



CONTACTS - PAPACO

. Dr Geoffroy Mauvais, coordinator of the Programme on African Protected Areas and Conservation - PAPACO
geoffroy.mauvais@iucn.org

. Madeleine Coetzer-Vosloo, Programme Officer PAPACO - Communications
madeleine.coetzer@iucn.org

. Hélène Magdelain, Youth Conservation focal point
info@youth-conservation.org

To contribute to a NAPA (article or publication on protected areas, cover photo, job offer, etc.), contact us at moocs@papaco.org.

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS LETTER DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF IUCN